

Amendments to the Claims:

1. (Currently Amended) A postage meter, including:

first control means operative to generate print data signals defining an invalid postage indicium, the ~~said~~ print data signals including first print data signals defining a valid postage indicium and second print data signals defining a void marking;

authorized printing means operative in response to the generated ~~said~~ print data signals to print a postage indicium on a mail item; and

second control means operative to prevent operation of the authorized printing means by the ~~said~~ second print data signals, whereby the authorized printing means is operated by the first print data signals to print a valid postage indicium.

2. (Currently Amended) A postage meter as claimed in claim 1, wherein the generated print data signals comprise a series of strings of print data signals, first strings comprising first print data signals and second strings comprising second print data signals, a determined bit position of the ~~said~~ strings of print data signals having a first binary value in respect of first print data signals and a second binary value in respect of second print data signals,; and wherein the second control means is responsive to a binary value of the ~~said~~ determined bit position to reject strings of print data signals in which the determined bit position has the second binary value.

3. (Currently Amended) A postage meter as claimed in claim 1, wherein the second control means is responsive to control signals generated by the first control means to reject the second print data signals defining the void marking ~~and not defining the valid postage indicium~~.

4. (Currently Amended) A postage meter as claimed in claim 1, wherein the second control means stores a bit map of print data signals corresponding to the void marking and ~~the second control means~~ is operative to utilize the ~~said~~ bit map to inhibit operation of the authorized printing means by print data signals defining the void marking.